

## **Dance Dance Dance (Let's Go Go Go) by fillmoredawn**

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**Summary:** Mike, El, and Will go to a dance. It's fun, right up until the moment it's not.

## Dance Dance Dance (Let's Go Go Go)

"Friday night," Mike declared, slamming his lunch tray down on the cafeteria table next to Eleven's. Dustin, Lucas, and Max were still stuck in the lunch line, but El and Will, who both packed their lunches, were already sitting next to each other comparing near-identical meals both made by Joyce. "What are you doing?"

"I don't know, I might have a hot date," said El, without looking up from her bag of baby carrots. "The boy who sits behind me in math keeps trying to take me out to the movies. In his car. He can *drive*."

Mike's face went blank like an arcade game rebooting in the middle of the boss level. He blinked twice, then his face broke out into a radiant grin and he said, "You're just pulling my leg, aren't you?"

El looked quickly to Will, who whispered, "He means you're kidding."

El gave Will a sharp nod of thanks, then turned back to Mike with a serious look in her eyes and said, "Yes. I'm pulling your leg."

Mike could have kissed her right then and there, but after a fast glance at the teacher standing guard in the cafeteria doorway, and the thought of another missed A.V. club meeting, he kicked out his chair and plopped down in it. "Well, what are you actually planning for Friday night?"

"I was thinking I'd go with you to do whatever you're so excited about, Mr. Wheeler," El said conversationally, dipping a spoon in and out of her yogurt. Mike's face broke out into a grin.

"Fantastic," Mike said. "We're going to a dance."

Eleven almost spilled her yogurt all over the table.

"A dance?" she said. "Mike Wheeler, taking me to a dance? You can't dance!" she reminded him. "You don't even like dancing."

"I like being with you," Mike said, and El blushed at the corniness of it all. "You got that purple dress a month ago and you haven't been able to wear it anywhere yet."

"I didn't know Hawkins was having a dance," Will piped up.

"They're not," said Mike, his eyes still fixed on El. "Shirley High School."

"That's 30 minutes away!"

"Hopper's driving us," Mike said, biting into a greasy slice of school pizza. "Already asked. Come on, El," Mike begged, poking her shoulder. "Say yes. Say yes!"

"Yes, yes!" El giggled. "Jeez."

"Can I come?" Will asked suddenly. Mike looked at him for the first time in the conversation.

"Thought you were hanging out with Jonathan Friday night," Mike said conversationally, but it still sounded forced.

"Nope," Will replied in the same tone. "I've got Friday night free."

"Well, that's great," Mike exclaimed, but his face didn't reflect the excitement in his voice. Eleven's head tilted slowly. "I'll see if I can swing a third ticket."

Will nodded and then the conversation fell silent, the only noise coming from the trio's chews and the noisy cafeteria around them. Eleven looked back and forth between the two of them several times. Just as she was about to speak, Dustin, Lucas, and Max showed up with their lunch trays, and the table was suddenly noisy again, just as they all liked it.

Still, Eleven couldn't stop herself from standing worried glances at Mike and Will for the rest of the period.

The dance ended up to be way more fun than any of them expected, right up until the moment it was no fun at all. Hopper dropped them off at the high school, pointing at a diner across the street and saying gruffly, "If anything happens, come get me immediately. I'll be back here to pick you up at 10:15. On the dot."

El and Will rolled their eyes and got out through the back but when

Mike turned to open the passenger door, Hopper put out an arm to stop him.

"10:15, Wheeler," he said, eyes narrow as if he could see all of Mike's secrets and shortcomings, and Mike shuddered, even though this speech was a regular occurrence. "Don't be late. If you hurt her, they'll be hell to pay."

"Uh, yes sir," Mike nodded, barely faking his terror. Hopper pulled his arm away and allowed Mike to get out of the car. "See you at 10:15, sir," said Mike, leaping down from the passenger seat and closing the door with what he hoped would be enough force to close it all the way but not enough force to get told off for slamming the door. It must have been acceptable, because the Chief just glared at Mike and drove off towards the diner across the street. Mike watched him drive off, his shoulders dropping a full two inches as Hopper left the parking lot.

"Mike!" El called, giggling with Will in the entranceway. "Come on!"

Mike took one last look to Hopper's Chevy, pulling safely into the diner parking lot, and took off towards El and Will.

Shirley was a much bigger county than Hawkins, which none of them had really realized until they entered the gymnasium to sea of dancing teenagers of mind numbing synthesizer. Will's face immediately dropped, horrified at the idea of having to spend the evening surrounded by strangers but El, always shocked by the idea that there was more to the world than Hawkins Lab, lit up.

"Let's dance!" she shouted immediately, and Mike and Will looked at each other, groaned, and followed her out onto the dance floor.

They danced for almost a full 45 minutes before *it* happened. Because at every high school dance, *it* had to happen.

The synthesizer faded out, and a slow song coming on in its place. Mike reached for Eleven automatically.

"Oh," Will said, eyes suddenly huge. Mike and El looked over at him. "I'm gonna- I'm gonna go over by the bleachers. See you later."

"Bye," El said, too taken with Mike to notice Will's disappearance much. "This is fun," she told Mike. "Thank you. For taking me even though you don't like dancing."

"I like being around you," Mike said, swaying horribly out of time with the music. "And it's infinitely worth it to see you in that purple dress."

"Mmm," El agreed, and let her head rest on Mike's shoulder. Mike only stepped on her foot three times before the slow song ended. A loud disco song started to play in its place, and Mike's eyes grew with panic.

"No!" he said over the music while Eleven laughed at his look. "I can't- I can't dance to disco!"

"Come on," she begged, twisting under his arm. "*Please*. We're never going to see any of these people ever again."

"Oh, alright." Mike gave in, taking both of El's hands and shaking like a crazy person. El burst out into laughter, but after seeing Mike's face turn red she cooed and shook in response. The crowd of teenagers immediately started to pull away from them, El and Mike's horrible disco dancing causing a bubble of space to be formed around them in the middle of the dance floor. Mike was swinging his arms towards the ceiling so quickly and with such force El, who was dancing far too close to be considered safe from the action, was getting a gentle breeze going through her hair. El, in response, began to do a poorly performed robot consisting mostly of chopping motions with her arms and strange facial expressions.

The song ended in barely a minute and a half (likely because the DJ had figured out how to get the two weird kids in the center of the floor to *stooooooooop*), fading into *Addicted to Love* as the other teenagers around Mike and El wooed and reclaimed the space they had surrendered for the disco song.

"Are you thirsty?" Mike asked El, giddy from dancing like an idiot surrounded by strangers. "I'm thirsty!"

"Go get us some punch, then," laughed El. "Grab some for Will too,

would you?"

Mike looked over to Will, sitting alone on the bleachers and nodded. Then he turned and disappeared into the crowd of dancing teens. El watched him go for a moment, then turned and walked towards Will.

"Hey," she greeted once she was within earshot. He looked over at her and lifted his head out of his hands. El asked, "Can I sit?" and Will nodded.

They sat together in silence, which they did often at home with a feeling of comfort, but this occasion felt less comforting and more weighted. El nodded her head along to the music, but Will sat stiffly, as if he couldn't hear it at all.

"Are you having a nice time?" Eleven asked him, after the lack of responsiveness became unbearable.

"Yes," Will answered quickly. "Yes, a very nice time."

"Really?" asked El, one eyebrow raised. "Because you look like an undercover mannequin."

Will blew out a burst of laughter, and the tightness in his body seemed to relax with it. Eleven smiled and gave his shoulder a lighthearted shove.

"Undercover mannequin," Will remarked, nodding. "Impressive word choice."

"Thanks," said El. She leaned her head against his shoulder and they watched the Shirley High School students dance, those strangers unaware of the suffering the two teens watching from the bleachers had been through.

"I have to tell you something," Will said, and his whole body stiffened up again like it had before he had laughed. Eleven could sense her physical contact wasn't welcome anymore, and she pulled her head off his shoulder.

"Okay," she said. "Is it bad?"

"Yes," Will answered immediately, then shook his head. "Maybe... I don't know."

"Okay." Eleven said. "It's alright. Just... Go ahead."

Will nodded. He opened his mouth to speak, then took a deep breath instead. Another breath. Then he looked straight ahead and said "Sometimes," so quietly Eleven had to tilt her ear close to his mouth to make out the words. "I think about... About kissing Mike."

"Oh," Eleven said, her spine straightening so quickly it might have snapped. "You think about kissing Mike?"

"Yes," Will confirmed, staring straight ahead. "Sometimes."

Eleven blinked a few times while she thought it over. "Me too," she said at last. "I think about kissing Mike a lot."

Will's face, one moment glum and darkened, brightened in an instant with a famous Byers smile.

"El," he began, then trailed off. Eleven waited patiently for him to rediscover what he wanted to say. "I'm not going to kiss Mike," he said finally, then looked over to her with an intense look in his eye. "You know I'm not going to kiss Mike, right? I would never do that. To either of you."

"I know," Eleven assured him. She put her hand on top of his, which grasping the bleacher so tightly his knuckles had gone white, and he relaxed slightly.

"I don't want to steal Mike from you," Will said. "I don't even want to date him, not really. Not at all. He's one of- He's my best friend. I just think that- The year that you were gone, I felt like such a burden on everybody, all the time. All the time. But Mike- I never felt like a burden for him. He *wanted* to help me, you know?"

El nodded, because she did know. Mike Wheeler was good. Mike Wheeler was glad to help anyone and everyone, as much as he could.

Will pulled his hand away from Eleven's and began to twist his fingers in his lap. "I don't want anything- *romantic*- with Mike. But

now... Just because he helped me so much. It's like he's stuck in my head, as someone who can help me get out of anything I'm not comfortable with. Anything. And it's not fair to him, because he can't, and it's not fair to expect him to try." Will clicked his tongue against his teeth. "Anyway, I just... I just needed to tell you." Will turned his body to face Eleven, and after a moment's pause, forced himself to look into her eyes. "I'm sorry," he said, his voice shaking. "And I understand if you hate me. I understand if you never want to see me, if you never want me to talk to you or Mike again. But I had to tell you. I'm- I'm sorry." He sighed and started to stand, but El grabbed his hand and pulled him back next to her.

"Will," she said, and her eyes narrowed, scanning him as if thinking carefully. Then, she squeezed his hand so tightly it almost hurt, and said, "You can kiss me, if you want."

"Oh- okay," Will said, his voice suddenly very high. He shifted on the bleacher, angling his shoulders to parallel El's. Almost robotically, he leaned in towards her face, a tremor creeping into the hand she was holding. Inches away from her lips, Will tilted his head and squeezed his eyes shut in preparation, bridging the final gap between them with a flinch that left their lips a hair's width apart.

Then, at the last moment, Will pulled himself away, his eyes overflowing with tears. Eleven let one arm lay across his back and guided his head to rest on her shoulder. They looked out at a ballroom full of happy girls dancing with happy boys, and Will's shoulders started to shake.

"I'm sorry," he said, after trying and failing to speak several times. El rubbed circles on his back like Joyce did to her whenever she woke up from a particularly bad nightmare. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

"Don't be," El told him, and Will turned his head, crying onto the soft fabric of her dress.

"I'm sorry," he said again. El didn't answer, just wrapped her other arm around to pull him into an embrace, resting her chin on top of his head. They were starting to get weird looks from the edge of the dancing crowd, but El closed her eyes and tried to tune everything else out.



"Hey, I couldn't find any punch, but I got-" Mike froze when he caught sight of them, one hand full of jelly beans he had found. "Is everybody okay?"

Will burst out into a new set of sobs without even looking up from the crook in Eleven's dress. Mike went from frozen to alarmed.

"Seriously," he said, looking from Will, who was shaking with sobs, to Eleven, who would look calm if it wasn't for how sad her face had turned, "Is somebody hurt? Is it... Is it-" his voice turned suddenly to a whisper, "*Mind flayer* stuff again? Is it *Upside Down* stuff?"

"No, Mike," Eleven said, leaning into Will's tender form, and for a moment it looked like Will was holding up Eleven just as much as she was supporting him. Then, she shifted again and they were back to the way they were before, El . "Just call my... My d-dad, okay?" she said, tripping over the word for the first time since early 9th grade. "I don't want to dance anymore."

"I'm sorry," Will cried again, his whole body shaking with every word.

Mike nearly fell, he turned around so fast. He was practically sprinting by the time he made it to the gymnasium door. He couldn't get out of the foreign high school fast enough, and was almost hit by a car running across the road to the diner Hop was waiting in. He hit the diner door with a slam, panting so hard he could barely speak, and opening the door with a fling. He caught sight of Hopper sitting by the window, who threw a bill down on the table and grabbed his coat.

Mike looked down at his hands and realized that, somewhere along the way, he had dropped all of his jelly beans.

The drive back to Hawkins was quiet, the only real noise coming from the soft radio Hopper had turned on when the stiffness in the air made it clear the teens weren't doing any talking. By the time Mike had made it back to the school, Will and Eleven were waiting outside, not touching except for a light brush between their shoulders.

Mike didn't inquire.

The first stop in Hawkins was to drop Mike off at his house, as the rest of the riders were all headed back to the same place. Mike jumped down from the passenger's seat, turned to Eleven, who was sitting in the back next to Will and said, "Are you going to walk me in?"

"Sure," Eleven said, and followed him around the car and up to his front door.

"Rough night?" Mike asked, climbing up the last step on his porch. He glanced at Will, sitting in the back of the Chief's Chevy with his head pressed against the window and his eyes staring up at the sky.

"No," Eleven answered, looking over her shoulder at their friend. She turned back to Mike, her eyes half-closed. "No, actually. It really wasn't at all. Eventually. It won't have been."

"I don't know if I always understand you, Eleanor," Mike joked, reminding her of the first week they had met with a playful poke to her side.

"Don't worry about it, Wheeler," she said, with a shake of her head that loosened one of her brown curls in front of her eye. "You don't always have to."

Mike reached out to touch the stray curl behind her ear. At first, his smile was loving, but it quickly turned wistful.

"Will's okay?" he asked, softly. "Really?"

"Yes," El said, her tone sure. "I think maybe... Tonight was the start of okay. Everything's going to be better from here."

"You're so beautiful when you talk optimistic like that," Mike grinned, and El hit him on the arm.

"Wheeler!" she said warningly. "You better kiss me before I have the chief arrest you."

"Sure, sure," said Mike, rolling his eyes, but he had a huge smile on his face by the time they were kissing. El pulled away, earlier than she usually did.

"Are you okay?" he asked her, reaching for her hand as was his impulse. She let him take it, but didn't respond and let her hand be limp in his. "Hey," he said, cupping her cheek with his free hand. "Really. Are you alright?"

El closed her eyes and said, "Yes," so quietly Mike almost missed it. Mike had never let go of her hand so quickly in his life.

"Is something wrong?" he asked. "We don't have to kiss if you don't want to. It's completely okay. I just want to know if anything's wrong. Is... Is anything wrong?"

"I love you, Michael Wheeler," El said, taking his hand again and bringing it up to her lips to kiss the back of his hand, like she had seen the man do in one hundred soap opera romances. "I love you so much. I'll see you tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Mike said, watching her step down the porch steps. He turned the doorknob, but didn't push the front door open, just stood on his porch and watched her retreat to the car. "Yeah," he called again. "Tomorrow!"

El waved one last time and disappeared behind the Chevy. Mike, denying a primal urge to remain on the porch until the car was so far away he couldn't see it anymore, pushed the front door open and practically fell inside. He left his suit jacket on the bannister for the rest of the night.

"Hey," Will greeted her softly when Eleven slipped in the back door and climbed in.

"Hey," Eleven said. She buckled in her seatbelt with a *click* and nodded to her dad to start up the car. She glanced out the window on Will's side of the car to look for Mike, but he wasn't on the porch anymore. She turned her attention to Will. "Are you... good?"

"Yeah," Will looked surprised at his own words, then nodded and said, "Yeah, actually. I am."

Eleven watched him closely for a minute, then linked her elbow in his and whispered, "I'm glad."

They both looked out two different windows. The rest of the drive home was silent.

***A/N: Thanks for reading! Please leave a review if possible. If you want, I'll even send you a picture of my dog in thanks! Just specify in your review.***

***Thanks!***